

I. INTRODUCTION

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OVERVIEW

Culpeper County's first Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Culpeper County Board of Supervisors on September 1, 1964 and was entitled Future Land Use Plan for the Town and County of Culpeper. The Comprehensive Plan has been amended several times since 1964, with the 1984 plan, the 1993 plan and the 1999 plan serving as the most recent official policy guides for the County. Since the adoption of the 1984 Comprehensive Plan, the rural nature of Culpeper County has experienced increasing pressures from population growth due to the County's central location within the Northern Virginia region and the improved highway network that serves the area. It is anticipated that population growth will continue at rates similar to or higher than that of the last decade which will place further demands on developable land in the County. Culpeper, wishes to maintain its rural character and avoid becoming a bedroom community to the nearby metropolitan area around Washington, D.C. However, the County recognizes the need not only to maintain, but to expand its economic base to support and address the needs of the citizens of the County. This Comprehensive Plan is built upon concepts which originated in the 1984 Plan, and includes numerous updates since the 1999 plan. This plan is intended to address the new challenges that will face Culpeper County over the next five to twenty years and it provides the framework that will help guide our decision makers to meet the goals and objectives of the citizens of Culpeper County.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is Culpeper County's official policy guide for current and future land-use decisions. This Plan should be considered long-range in nature and should provide a picture of how Culpeper County wishes to develop over the next 5 to 20 years. As a policy document, the Comprehensive Plan provides a means for the County's citizens and decision makers to determine the best methods or strategies for achieving the goals conceptualized in this Plan.

AUTHORITY FOR THE PLAN

The Commonwealth of Virginia requires that every local governing body in the State adopt a Comprehensive Plan. Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia states in part that the local planning commission must prepare a plan which "shall be general in nature..." and "...shall show the commission's long-range recommendations for the general development of the territory covered by the plan". The Comprehensive Plan may include, but is not limited to, the designation of land-use, transportation systems, public services and facilities, historic areas and areas for renewal. In addition, the Plan must include methods of implementation such as a zoning ordinance and a capital improvements plan.

State law requires that each locality's Comprehensive Plan be reviewed by the local Planning Commission at least once every five years in order to determine how closely the Plan is being adhered to and whether or not it should be amended.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Culpeper County Comprehensive Plan is the result of a series of events and actions that have blended technical data and theories with community ideas. The process used in developing this plan is summarized below:

- As required by state law, the Planning Commission reviewed the 1999 Comprehensive Plan as amended and determined that the Comprehensive Plan should be amended to reflect current and proposed future land uses.
- Information pertaining to the County's population, environment, economy, housing, transportation and land-use was collected and analyzed. The data was compiled from a variety of sources including the 2000 Census.
- The viewpoint of the County's citizens on the issues facing Culpeper County was obtained through a series of community meetings and the standard public hearing process.
- A set of goals was developed utilizing all available data. These provide the current philosophy directing the official policy towards future development in Culpeper County.
- A draft of the Plan was presented to the Planning Commission and a series of work sessions were held to address concerns regarding the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, and the draft was again reviewed accordingly.
- As required by State law, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on _____, 2005 and recommended to the Board of Supervisors that the proposed 2005 Comprehensive Plan be adopted to replace the 1999 Comprehensive Plan as amended in its entirety.
- The Board of Supervisors held a public hearing as required by law. The amended Comprehensive Plan became effective on _____, 2005.
- Between 1999 and 2004, amendments to the 1999 Plan were adopted, insuring ongoing compliance with the Code of Virginia. The 2005 Comprehensive Plan replaces the 1999 Plan as amended in its entirety.

The planning process does not end with the adoption of the Plan. The recommendations contained in this plan must be implemented through the methods outlined in Chapter 14 and through amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Capital Improvements Plan. Ongoing review and update of this plan will also be undertaken.

UTILIZING THIS PLAN

This plan is divided into chapters that address Culpeper County's existing demographics, economic development, the environment, agriculture, public services and facilities, housing, transportation, historic areas and existing land use and zoning. Each of these chapters contains the background information upon which the Future Land Use Plan chapter is based, as well as the Public Facilities and Capital Improvements chapter. Chapter 11 addresses the

goals and objectives for the 2004 Comprehensive Plan. The final chapter provides the mechanisms for the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan, as well as providing the strategies and framework for future actions.

CULPEPER COUNTY PRESENT AND PAST

Present

Culpeper County is located in the foothills of Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains and lies entirely within the Piedmont Plateau. The County varies in landscape from open fields to forested hills, with numerous rivers and streams, all of which flow to the Rappahannock River, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. Culpeper County is bounded by the Rappahannock River to the northeast, the Rapidan River to the southeast and the Hughes Branch, Crooked Run and the Robinson Rivers to the west.

Culpeper County, situated in north-central Virginia, is a rural community of 38,555 people with a strong agricultural base and a diversity of service and production industries. As one of 95 counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia, Culpeper County encompasses 381 square miles and contains 243,840 acres. The Town of Culpeper is the county seat that is located in the approximate geographic center of the County. As the only incorporated Town in the County it is the business, service and cultural center for the County.

Culpeper County is located centrally between four major localities. Washington, DC/Northern Virginia (see Map I.A) is located 75 miles northeast of the Town of Culpeper, is the largest of these and is responsible for most of the development pressures that face Culpeper County. The second largest nearby locality is the City of Richmond that is located 90 miles southeast of Culpeper. The two other areas that are somewhat smaller but closer in proximity to Culpeper County are Charlottesville, located 45 miles to the southwest, and Fredericksburg that is 30 miles to the east. These localities are linked to Culpeper by several major roads that include Routes 29, 15, 3, 522 and 211. Additionally, Interstate Routes 66, 64, 81, and 95 are all within a forty-mile radius of Culpeper County.

An elected seven member Board of Supervisors governs Culpeper County. One member represents each magisterial district and each serves a four-year term of office (see Map I.B). A county administrator oversees the daily operation of the County government.

Past

In 1648 King Charles II of England granted 5,282,000 acres to seven British proprietors, one of which was Lord John Culpeper. Lord John Culpeper's property, called the Northern Neck Proprietary, consisted of 629,120 acres, which encompassed all of the land located between the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers. John Culpeper bequeathed his property to his son, Thomas Culpeper, 2nd Baron Culpeper of Thoresway¹, Colonial Governor of Virginia from 1680-83. When Thomas Culpeper died in 1689, his property was left to his wife and his daughter Catherine, who married Thomas Fairfax, Fifth Baron of Fairfax of Cameron¹ in

¹ Burkes Peerage Baronetage, 106th Edition

1690. Their son, Thomas, Sixth Baron Fairfax, of Cameron¹, inherited the property that remained in his name until the end of the Colonial era.

The first permanent settlement in what was then Orange County, occurred in 1724 at Stevensburg. In 1748, the Virginia House of Burgesses divided Orange County into two separate counties, one to retain the name Orange and the other to be named Culpeper after Catherine Culpeper. Culpeper County originally contained the areas now in Culpeper, Madison and Rappahannock Counties. Madison became an independent county in 1792 and Rappahannock in 1831. At the time of Culpeper's formation, the county was agrarian as cattle, sheep, and hogs were raised. Tobacco, corn, wheat and other grains were the primary crops of that era. Grains were ground into meal and flour at the approximately thirty water-powered grist mills located throughout the County.

In May 1749, the first Culpeper Court convened in the home of Robert Coleman, not far from where the Town of Culpeper is presently located. In July 1749, 17-year-old George Washington was commissioned as the first County surveyor. One of his first duties was to lay out the County's courthouse complex, which included the courthouse, jail, stocks, gallows and accessory buildings. By 1752 the complex stood at what is presently the northeast corner of Davis and Main Streets. The courthouse village was named the Town of Fairfax after Thomas, Sixth Baron Fairfax.

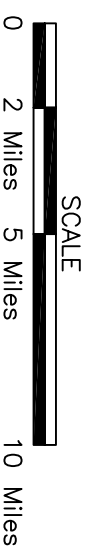
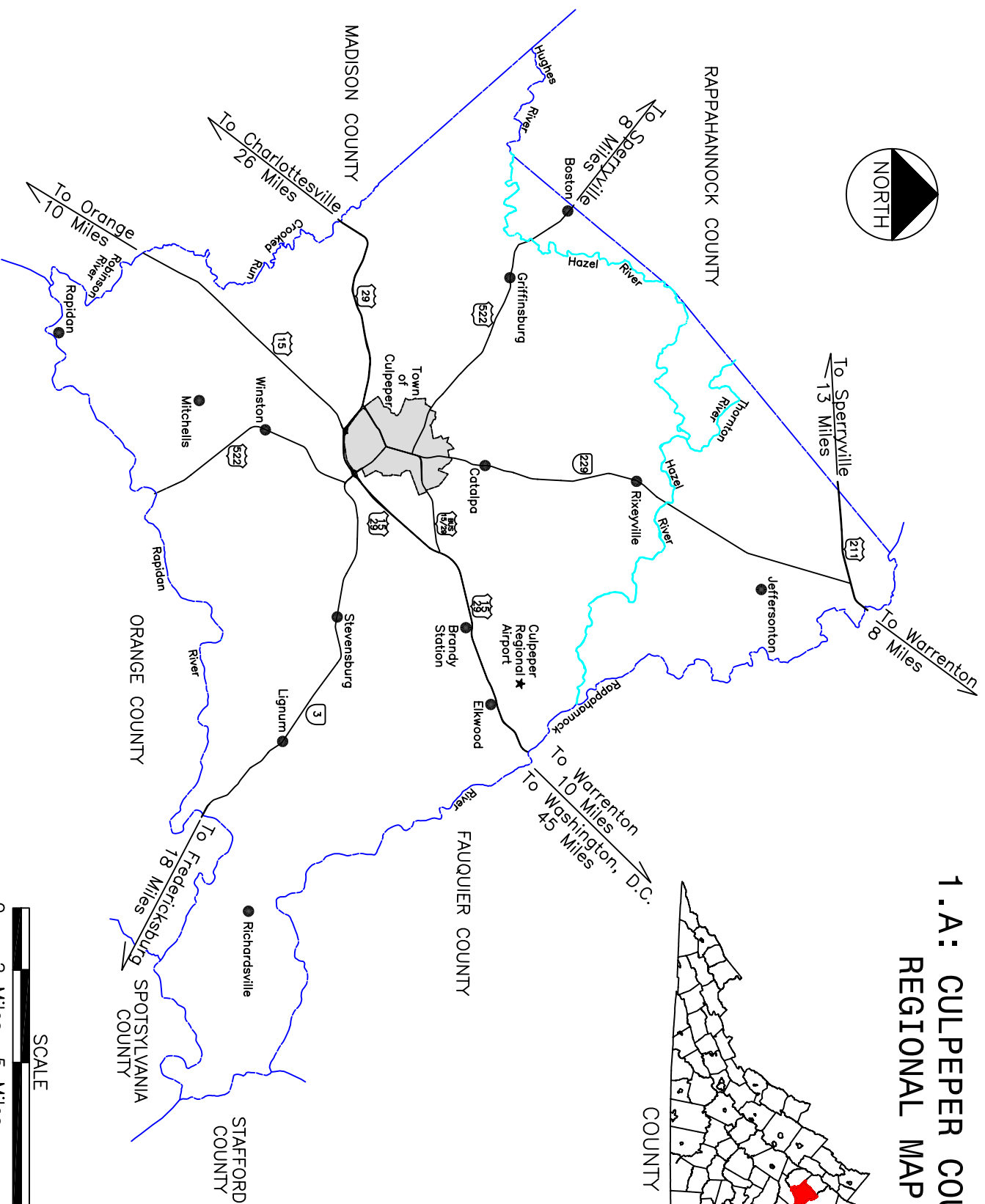
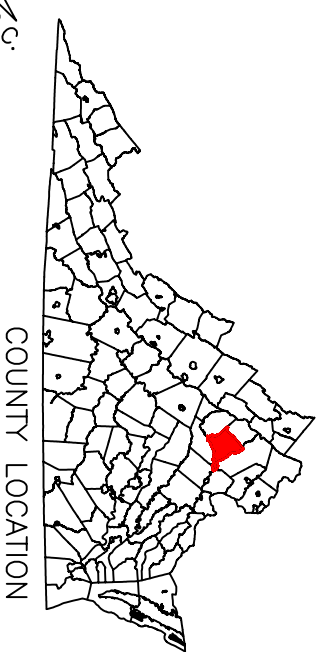
At the Virginia convention held in May 1775, the colony was divided into sixteen districts. Each district had instructions to raise a battalion of men "to march at a minute's notice." Culpeper, Orange and Fauquier, forming one district, raised 350 men who came to be called the Culpeper Minute Men. The Minute Men, marching under their flag depicting a rattlesnake and inscribed with the words "Liberty or Death" and "Don't Tread on Me", took part in the Battle of Great Bridge, the first Revolutionary battle on Virginia soil. The Culpeper Minute Men reorganized in 1860 in response to the impending Civil War and became part of 13th Infantry's Company B.

Culpeper County was the site of several battles during the Civil War, most notably the Battles of Cedar Mountain and Brandy Station. Both the Union and Confederate Armies marched through, fought and camped in the County repeatedly throughout the duration of the War. The Battle of Brandy Station, which occurred on June 9, 1863, was the *greatest cavalry battle ever to take place in the western hemisphere*². Hansboro Ridge, just north of Stevensburg, was the location of a large encampment of Union soldiers under the direction of General Grant during the winter of 1863-64.

Culpeper County has numerous homes and buildings that are historically significant. Several structures, both in the Town and in the County, have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Additionally, several areas in the County have been designated as historically significant. The Village of Rapidan, located in the southern most tip of the County, has been recognized as a historic district, in part, for the structures in the village and for the important role it once played in moving goods and services to and from the region in Colonial times.

² Historic Culpeper, Culpeper Historic Society, Inc., Culpeper, Virginia, 1974

1.A: CULPEPER COUNTY REGIONAL MAP



1.B: CULPEPER COUNTY MAGISTERIAL DISTRICTS

